

## Order of Worship for July 30, 2023

### Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

### Opening Hymn: “Come Unto Me, Ye Weary” – Hymn #684

Confession and Forgiveness p. 203

### Service of the Word

#### Entrance Psalm:

P: Rejoice in the Lord always;

**C: again I will say, Rejoice.**

P: Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

**C: whose hope is in the LORD his God,**

P: who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,

**C: who keeps faith forever;**

P: who executes justice for the oppressed,

**C: who gives food to the hungry.**

P: The LORD sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

**C: The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.**

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Rejoice in the Lord always;

**C: again I will say, Rejoice.**

#### Kyrie: (*Lord, Have Mercy*) p. 204

#### Hymn of Praise: (*Glory to God in the Highest*) p. 204

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us pray.... Look in mercy, heavenly Father, upon Your faithful people, and by Word and Spirit bring to completion that good work which You have begun in us. Gather in Your people that all the world may see and know that what has been cast down is raised up and what has grown old is made new, until the work You have begun in us is brought to its joyful fulfillment in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**C: Amen.**

**Old Testament Reading:-- Zephaniah 1:1-18**

R: The word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

“I will utterly sweep away everything  
from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.

“I will sweep away man and beast;  
I will sweep away the birds of the heavens  
and the fish of the sea,

and the rubble with the wicked.

I will cut off mankind  
from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.

“I will stretch out My hand against Judah  
and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal

and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, those who bow down on the  
roofs

to the host of the heavens,

those who bow down and swear to the LORD

and yet swear by Milcom,

those who have turned back from following the LORD,

who do not seek the LORD or inquire of Him.”

Be silent before the LORD God!

For the day of the LORD is near;

the LORD has prepared a sacrifice

and consecrated his guests.

And on the day of the LORD’s sacrifice—

“I will punish the officials and the king's sons

and all who array themselves in foreign attire.

On that day I will punish

everyone who leaps over the threshold,

and those who fill their master's house

with violence and fraud.

“On that day,” declares the LORD,

“a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate,

a wail from the Second Quarter,

a loud crash from the hills.

11 Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar!

For all the traders are no more;

all who weigh out silver are cut off.

12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,

and I will punish the men  
who are complacent,  
those who say in their hearts,  
‘The LORD will not do good,  
nor will he do ill.’  
Their goods shall be plundered,  
and their houses laid waste.  
Though they build houses,  
they shall not inhabit them;  
though they plant vineyards,  
they shall not drink wine from them.”

The great day of the LORD is near,  
near and hastening fast;  
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter;  
the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day,  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of ruin and devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness,  
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry  
against the fortified cities  
and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring distress on mankind,  
so that they shall walk like the blind,  
because they have sinned against the LORD;  
their blood shall be poured out like dust,  
and their flesh like dung.  
Neither their silver nor their gold  
shall be able to deliver them  
on the day of the wrath of the LORD.  
In the fire of His jealousy,  
all the earth shall be consumed;  
for a full and sudden end  
He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God**

**Second Lesson:--Zephaniah 3:12-20**

R: “I will leave in your midst  
a people humble and lowly.  
They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,

those who are left in Israel;  
they shall do no injustice  
and speak no lies,  
nor shall there be found in their mouth  
a deceitful tongue.  
For they shall graze and lie down,  
and none shall make them afraid.”

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;  
shout, O Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter of Jerusalem!  
The LORD has taken away the judgments against you;  
He has cleared away your enemies.  
The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
you shall never again fear evil.  
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
“Fear not, O Zion;  
let not your hands grow weak.  
The LORD your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing.  
I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival,  
so that you will no longer suffer reproach.  
Behold, at that time I will deal  
with all your oppressors.  
And I will save the lame  
and gather the outcast,  
and I will change their shame into praise  
and renown in all the earth.  
At that time I will bring you in,  
at the time when I gather you together;  
for I will make you renowned and praised  
among all the peoples of the earth,  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes,” says the LORD.

R: This is the Word of the Lord

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Alleluia and Verse:** p. 205

**Holy Gospel:-- Luke 6:17–26**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the Sixth chapter

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

And [Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch Him, for power came out from Him and healed them all.

And He lifted up his eyes on His disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

“Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord

**C: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**Apostle’s Creed:**

**Sermon Hymn:** “*Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding*” – **Hymn #345**

**Sermon:** “*Zephaniah the Prophet*”

The end is near! The end is near! The end of what, you ask? Depends on who you talk to. The streets full of people moving into and out of apartments point to the end of summer and the end of the peace and quiet of Ames while the students are gone. Others will point to the heat wave we’ve had this week, and use it to point to the end of the world coming due to climate change. The continuing conflict in Ukraine caused the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to move their Doomsday Clock to 90 seconds before midnight, closer than it’s been before. Still others will look at a loved one suffering from cancer, or disabled by an accident, and know that this is the end of their normal life.

The ultimate end we look to is the day of the Lord, when God returns to judge everyone and set everything right. And that’s what Zephaniah is writing about. His name means “God protects,” and he knew all that God needed to protect his people from, especially themselves. And so he spends his book warning the people of Judah to turn back to God, because the day of the Lord, the day of God’s judgment, was coming.

Zephaniah certainly knew a thing or two about anger, sorrow, bitterness, and fear. His entire book of prophecy is nothing but doom and gloom —until the end. Up until the middle of chapter 3, Zephaniah prophesies nothing but judgment on faithless Israel and the pagan nations around her. Words like “wail,” “waste,” and “woe” carry the day. The future looks bleak!

Reading the whole book of Zephaniah, well, it’s full of dead bodies. Zephaniah’s vision of divine destruction is devastating. The dead are scattered everywhere. The book opens with the grand sweep of God’s judgment. God says, “I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth. I will sweep away man and beast, I will sweep away the birds of the heaven and the fish of the sea . . . I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth.” The book opens with that grand sweep and then it continues with the particulars. God judges all, the priests and the people, the rulers and the merchants, the warriors and the laborers, and like a nightmare God continues to judge late into the night. Zephaniah sees him, wandering around with a lantern, seeking yet more people to destroy. The dead are scattered everywhere. Perhaps the most horrifying vision is when God prepares a sacrifice in the midst of the nations. Since his people have abused the sacrificial system he gave them, God enacts his own sacrifice in judgment. Only this time, the victim sacrificed on the altar is not a bull; it is his very own people. He places them upon the altar and sacrifices them, as the nations gather and watch in horror at this spectacle of judgment.

Then, at the end, we have this one small picture of joy. Yet Zephaniah’s joy is not joy without sorrow, it is joy in the presence of one who comes to us in the midst of our sorrow. What do we learn about God from the wounds he has inflicted? First, we learn that God rules over all nations. His judgment extends to all social classes, throughout all nations, and lasts for all time. You cannot get away from it. Second, we learn that God’s power is overwhelming. No one can resist him. He is the one who creates and he is the one who destroys. But, third . . . and here is where I would encourage you to trust that God can use your imagination . . . third, God is present with his people in the midst of judgment. In that most horrifying vision of the sacrifice of his very own people, I believe we get a glimpse of God with us in Christ. God is most fully present with us in the midst of his judgment. Jesus is Israel reduced to one. He is that one body sacrificed on the altar, bearing the eternal punishment of our sin. Here, we see that God will not leave his people alone in his judgment, but rather comes for them in the midst of his judgment.

Jesus is the one who bears the Father’s wrath for us. He becomes the sacrifice that takes away our sin and he is the presence of God in the midst of our sorrow. This death is not the reluctant death of someone who begrudgingly gave his life. It is not, as some theologians wrongly say, a strange form of divine child abuse. The Father killing his Son. It is the mystery of joy and sorrow joined for eternity in the relationship of the Father and the Son. The Son in joyful sorrow offers his life for you. The Father in sorrowful joy receives you on the arms of his dying Son. And when that Son rises and ascends into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, he still bears on his body those wounds. Father and Son in joy and sorrow joined together forever for you. And now the Spirit works through this word to bring this presence of God to you.

That is what Zephaniah is singing about at the end of his book. That is the joy that Zephaniah utters in amazement, the joy of the presence of God with his people in the midst of their suffering. God in the midst of his people runs like a refrain throughout this text. Zephaniah proclaims, “The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty hero who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you with his love.” God will rejoice over you with gladness because all judgment is taken away. God will quiet you with his love because nothing can separate you from him. Zephaniah invites us here to see joy and sorrow together in the eternal love of God.

Why should Israel rejoice? Because the day would come when God would take away his judgments against them. In other words, he would forgive her sins. The LORD, the true King of Israel, would stand in the midst of his people, not to destroy, but to heal and save. His forgiveness of sin and removal of guilt would be cause for great rejoicing, and instead of stunning them into silence by devastating destruction, God would quiet them with his love. In fact, the very God who previously threatened doom and gloom would quiet himself and rejoice over them with gladness.

What was true for Israel is true for you too. God has taken away his judgments against you, for the LORD, the King of Israel, has indeed come into our midst by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..., full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Christ came on Christmas to “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Christ came to save you from your sins and me from my sins. He came to speak his Word to us so that we may have his joy in us—and that our joy may be full and complete (John 15:11). Jesus doesn’t want you to be cynical, depressed, or dogged by a guilty conscience. He wants you to experience the joy of a free spirit and forgiven heart—a conscience unburdened by the circumstances of life in this world, which is passing away.

It is for people like her that God comes to us. He comes to prepare a place of worship. A place where there is joy in the presence of one who comes to us in the midst of our sorrow. As God gathers us, there are joys we celebrate. The birth of a child. A positive response to chemotherapy. And there are sorrows we mourn. A divorce. A grandmother developing dementia. These joys and these sorrows are brought before God in prayer. But in his word, God brings us Jesus Christ. He has come to create a place where all people and all nations gather before him. Why? Because he has taken away divine judgment and now rejoices over you with gladness and quiets you with his love. This is God’s gift of joy. Not joy in the absence of sorrow but joy in the presence of Jesus who comes to you in the midst of your sorrow. And the joy that he brings, like the wounds he still carries, is a joy that will never end.

**Prayer of the Church:**

P: Lord in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

**Sharing Our Ministry:**

## **Offering and Voluntary:**

### **Service of the Sacrament p. 208**

#### **Preface: p. 208**

P: It is truly, good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father, for You bring forth judgment on evil, but in Your mercy You offer salvation from sin in Your Son, Christ Jesus. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing. . .

#### **Sanctus: (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 208**

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

P: Blessed are You, Lord God, for You have the power to bring forth full destruction against all evil, but even more in Your even greater love You turned that wrath on Your Son, Christ Jesus, who died so that we can be forgiven. Send us Your Holy Spirit so that we follow Christ's command to come to the supper of His true body and blood, trusting in all His promises to us. All this we pray as He taught us to pray . . .

#### **Lord's Prayer: p. 209**

#### **The Words of Our Lord, Pax Domini: (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 209**

#### **Agnus Dei: (*Lamb of God*) p. 210**

#### **Distribution of Holy Communion:**

*"O Lord, How Shall I Meet Thee"* – **Hymn #334**

*"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"* – **Hymn #515**

#### **Nunc Dimitti: (*Now Let Us Depart*) p. 211**

#### **Prayer After Communion:**

P: Lord God, we rejoice that you have come to us in this special meal. Strengthen us that we may now go share all you have done for us with people of all nations, to the ends of the earth.

**C: Amen.**

#### **Benedicamus (*Let Us Bless*) and Benediction: p. 212**

#### **Closing Hymn: "*O God of Light*" – Hymn #836**

#### **Postlude**